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ABSTRACT

The evaluation strategies and results for Title I programs were compared and contrasted. Two systems of evaluation to examine the nature and effectiveness of Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I programs nationwide were implemented. The first involved sponsoring national studies, including the Study of the Sustaining Effects of Compensatory Education and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The other strategy (the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System-TIERS) utilized a system of aggregating locally-implemented evaluations at the state and federal levels. It was implemented nationally in 1979-80. Information was collected through different means for each strategy. TIERS was universally implemented, while national studies sampled only a small portion of projects. TIERS permitted use of multiple instruments, but national studies generally adopted one specific test. The purpose of the evaluation strategies was to determine what types of compensatory education services were provided and to whom, and how effective services were at improving educational achievement. (DWH)

MEASURING THE EFFECTS OF COMPENSATORY EDUCATION --
SEARCHING FOR CONVERGENCE FROM NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL EVALUATIONS

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Measuring the Effects of Compensatory Education -- Searching for Convergence from National, State, and Local Evaluations

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Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has become the largest Federal elementary and secondary education program in the history of the United States, with expenditures in fiscal year 1981 of approximately $3.2 billion. The question of whether Title I "works" has been debated since the program was initiated in 1965, and has intensified in recent months due to proposed cuts in funding for the program.

The question of whether Title I works does not lead to a simple answer, since the program has many different kinds of objectives, and hence can be either effective or ineffective in different ways. For example, Title I can be examined in terms of who receives services, in terms of how well developed those services are, in terms of how cost-effeciently programs are run, or (and this will focus the basis of the discussion in this paper) in terms of how effective services are in enhancing the educational achievement of participants.

When discussing whether or not Title I "works," another point must be kept in mind -- there is no national Title I program per se. Title I is a source of funding for local school districts, each of which designs and implements its own Title I program, within federal and State guidelines. Thus, at the national level one is measuring only the aggregate, overall effects of 14,000 different programs, while at the local level one has the opportunity to examine closely the educational (and other) effects of a particular program, in a particular place, with particular types of participants.

Numerous studies have attempted to measure the effectiveness of Title I. The most recent of these national efforts are the Sustaining Effects Study and the implementation of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System. In addition to those two efforts, the National Asessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has analyzed achievement in Title I schools, though they are not able to identify Title I participants and examine their achievement explicitly. In addition, State and local education agencies conduct Title I evaluations beyond those required to complete the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System forms. Indeed, the Title I law requires districts to conduct evaluation for program improvement and decision-making as well as for reporting achievement information.

In this paper, we will review the findings from each of these sources of information, in order to develop different perspectives on assessing the effectiveness of Title I. While in the ideal world (or the world of trial by jury) most of the evidence will point toward a "most likely" explanation, that kind of overall finding regarding the effectiveness of Title I has remained somewhat elusive.

Sources of Information

The Sustaining Effects Study

The Sustaining Effects Study (SES) is a six year study of the Title I, Part A (Grants to Local Education Agencies) programs which was begun in 1975 and is essentially completed. The study was designed to document: (1) the characteristics of districts, schools, and students participating in Title I; (2) the nature of Title I services provided to program participants; and (3) an analysis of the effectiveness of those services over several years of program participation.

The SES represents the most comprehensive effort to date in attempting to document and analyze the nature and effects of compensatory education programs. Data were collected on all students in a nationally representative sample of over 200 elementary schools during the three year period from the fall of 1975 through the spring of 1978. Not only were data collected on certain characteristics of students, teachers and principals, on student progress in the basic skills and on attitudes towards school, but interviews were conducted with the parents of a representative sub-sample of 15,000 students. Information on the effects of student achievement over one year and over three years is now available.

Title I Evaluation and Reporting System

The 1979-80 school year marked the first year in which all States provided information using the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS), a system of models and reporting forms designed to yield aggregatable, nationwide information about Title I participation and effects. Reports were received from all of the States by the late summer of 1981, and included achievement information for reading, mathematics, and language arts programs in grades 2 through 12, as well as student participation and instructional staffing information for all grades.

State summary data. States had the option of reporting data from all of their local education agencies (LEAs) or from a sample of one-third of their LEAs. Twenty States reported on a sample of their LEAs, and their test data were weighted for the data analyses. States reported, for each grade, test cycle, and subject the following information: membership (the enrollment for the project on a particular day), the number of students with pretest and posttest scores, the weighted mean posttest score, and the weighted mean gain. In addition to this achievement information, States provided information describing the types of services they provided, characteristics of staff and participants, training activities, etc. This information was summarized across districts by each State.

Project level data. In addition to the aggregate information, States reported project level information for grades 2, 6, and 10. Project level information included an LEA identification code, a descriptor of the type of project, subject area, evaluation model, test interval (whether fall-spring, fall-fall, or spring-spring testing), hours per week of instruction, total number of hours of project instruction, student-instructor ratio, membership, number of students with pre- and posttest scores, posttest identification code, mean posttest score and mean gain.[1]

[1] Expressed in normal curve equivalents, or NCEs, an equal-interval unit with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06.

The TIERS State aggregate data should be interpreted with some caution, since these data: (1) are based on scores aggregated across many different tests, of varying quality and appropriateness, and administered under only locally controlled conditions; (2) in some situations were obtained in States or districts implementing the evaluation procedures for the first time; and (3) in some situations, quality control procedures may not have been adequately implemented. In addition, Linn, Dunbar, Harnisch, and Hastings (draft, 1982) have recently conducted an assessment of the validity of evaluations using the TIERS models, and have concluded that: (1) fall-to-spring gain estimates are subject to numerous sources of bias, the cumulative effects of which make the estimated gains overstate the amount of impact; (2) while annual testing produces results less succeptible to bias (and reduces test burden), there is still apt to be a small positive bias of 1, or possibly 2, NCEs; and (3) Models B and C and the non-normed variation of Model A tend to have practical limitations, technical inadequacies, or both.

Test scores were reported in NCEs, with the fall-to-spring (6 month) evaluations aggregated separately from the annual (12 month, most commonly spring to spring) evaluations. Projects were aggregated across the model employed; however, estimates based on the grades 2, 6, and 10 project level information indicate that approximately 98% of the students were tested with Model A-1, the norm-referenced model.

While achievement data were collected from all SEAs (which includes Insular areas, Territories and the Bureau of Indian Affairs), this paper includes data only from the 50 States and the District of Columbia. The Insular areas and Territories are significantly dissimilar to the States (and to each other) to exclude them from a national analysis (e.g., due to lack of availability of suitable tests and norms, testing in languages other than English).

National Assessment of Educational Progress

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) conducts periodic assessments of student performance in a wide variety of areas. In a national assessment of reading (NAEP, 1981), the performance of 9-, 13-, and 17-year olds was compared at three points in time, spanning 9 years. Information was available on which schools in the sample were eligible for Title I funds, but not on which students were in Title I programs.

State and Local Title I Evaluations

Numerous State and local education agencies have shared the results of their own extensive Title I evaluations with ED. While these studies are not nationally representative, they do point to types of projects which may be having a positive impact on student achievement. State and local evaluations often focus on ancillary questions, such as whether Title I summer programs are effective or whether or not gains that were observed just following Title I project participation are sustained over time.

Types of Comparisons

A primary goal of Title I evaluation is to determine whether students learn more with the supplementary services provided with Title I funds than they would have learned without the supplementary services. Classical experimental designs that would allow for equivalent comparison and treatment groups are virtually impossible to implement, leaving evaluators faced with the necessity of using surrogate comparison groups, using serendipitous and probably non-comparable comparison groups, using statistical estimates based on non-comparable groups, or attempting to work from baseline data and infer changes in performance to the program. The main reason for these constraints stems from the legislative requirement that Title I serve the educationally neediest children, within eligible schools. When Title I becomes Chapter 1 (of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act) on October 1, 1982, this constraint may change somewhat, since Chapter 1 (according to the interpretation of the law in a recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking) may no longer strictly require that only those most in educational need be served.

The sources of information listed above each use some combination of these methodologies in order to arrive at estimates of program effect. The TIERS provides three models for evaluation of Title I projects. As has been noted, virtually all students are evaluated with the norm-referenced model, Model A, which uses a surrogate comparison group consisting of students with similar achievement standing who were in the norming sample for the particular achievement test used. The SES, in some of their analyses, employed a comparison group composed of students similar to Title I students who were in schools not served by Title I. In other analyses, the SES also adopted a norm-referenced approach. NAEP uses baseline data to measure change over time. While each of these methods is different, one can be optimistic (at least to start with) that the results may converge.

Educational effects can also be measured over varying lengths of time. It is preferable, given the difficulty in assessing educational impact, to measure students over a substantial length of time; however, practical considerations may make this difficult or impossible. Nevertheless, while long-term evaluation may be preferable, if the long term impact of a program is positive one would expect to see positive (and probably smaller) impacts over shorter periods. The TIERS assesses achievement impact over relatively short periods of time -- either 6 months (October to April in a typical fall-to-spring evaluation) or 12 months (April to April in a typical spring-to-spring evaluation). The SES looked at student achievement level both over the fall to spring of a typical district Title I evaluation and over periods of time up to three years. The NAEP studies look at achievement of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds at approximate four year intervals.

Short-term Achievement Impact

Short-term achievement impact, i.e., information on achievement over one year or less, is available both from the SES and from the TIERS. Information over both a full year and over the six months typical of a fall-to-spring evaluation are available from both sources. Overall, it was found that compensatory services, particularly Title I services,

often have positive impacts on achievement. Different patterns of achievement were found for different groups, however. In addition, information from the TIERS shows that students tested on an annual testing schedule consistently showed much smaller gains than those tested fall-to-spring.

The results of the TIERS reading and mathematics data are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. The results of the fall-to-spring evaluations showed substantial gains for Title I students -- during six months in the program, the typical elementary school reading student moved from the 16th to the 25th percentile. Numerous studies and local evaluations have questioned whether students who show such gains on a fall-to-spring testing schedule show similar gains when measured over a full year. Early studies attributed the differences to "summer loss", speculating that low achieving students tended to forget what they had learned over the summer. Later work, however, has suggested that the fault may lie with the methodology, and that several sources of bias may combine to greatly overstate the estimated gains. In virtually all cases where both fall-spring and spring-spring testing cycles have both been implemented (within grade levels within States), it is almost always the case that spring posttest scores are comparable, while fall pretest scores are substantially lower than pretest scores obtained the previous spring.

Given these concerns and observations, it may be wise to focus on the annual results rather than the fall-to-spring results. For both reading and mathematics, the results show modest positive gains at the elementary school level and a mixed pattern of gains and losses at the high school level. The typical elementary school reading student would move from the 22nd to the 26th percentile in achievement. Research has indicated, however, that the results of Model A1 have a bias of approximately +1.0 NCE (RMC, 1982; Linn et al, 1982), so a correction of that amount may be in order. Table 3 presents the corrected achievement results for reading and mathematics.

In reading, small positive gains are found throughout the elementary grades except at grade 2; results for the high school grades continue to be mixed. In mathematics, the pattern is mixed, with no effect found at grades 2 and 12; losses in grades 3, 9, 10, and 11; and gains in the other grades. In both reading and mathematics, there is a tendency for larger gains to be found in the upper elementary grades than in the lower elementary grades.

The SES, which compared compensatory education students with a similar group of needy children who were not served by compensatory education, found a different pattern of results. In the SES, positive effects in reading were found at grades 1, 2, and 3, but not in grades 4, 5, and 6. In mathematics, the SES found positive effects at grades 1 through 6. The TIERS found similar results before correction for bias, although the gain at grade 3 was very small. After correction for bias, the TIERS still noted gains in grades 4 to 6 as well as in grades 7 and 8 (the SES covered only grades 1 - 6).

Both studies indicate however, that compensatory education, particularly Title I, have positive effects on achievement, although the effects

generally are modest. The TIERS suggests that Title I is more likely to be effective at the elementary grades than at high school. While this may indicate that remediation is more effective with younger students, it should also be noted that the population served at the high school level is considerably needier that at the elementary level. At the elementary level, the typical Title I student scores at the 22nd percentile in reading; the typical student in grade 11 is at the 14th percentile. In addition, standardized tests (particularly in reading) may be quite insensitive to the high school curriculum, since it is quite often the case that no raw score gain at all (or a gain of one or two points, or even a loss of one or two points) will not change a student's percentile status from pre- to posttesting.

It may be the case (this is discussed more fully later in the paper) that Title I students who are only "slightly needy" may, with the extra help received through Title I, gain enough to enable them to function well in the regular classroom and to maintain their gains, while the "severely needy" students are unable to make such gains. Thus, at the elementary grades, where a greater proportion of students are served, and thus more "slightly needy" students are served, gains are noted, while at the upper grades, where only "severely needy" students are served, no gains are found.

Table 1

1979-80 Title I Reading Achievement Results (50 States plus the District of Columbia)

Grade	Annual Testing Schedule							Fall-to-Spring Testing Schedule						
	Weighted Number Tested	Normal Curve Equivalent			Percentile		Percent[2] Additional Growth	Weighted Number Tested	Normal Curve Equivalent			Percentile		Percent Additiona Growth
		Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post			Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	
2	85,019	37.6	38.6	1.0	28	29	4	310,555	30.8	40.2	9.4	18	32	77
3	108,708	34.3	36.7	2.4	23	26	17	293,909	28.7	36.1	7.4	16	26	90
4	108,576	34.7	36.6	1.9	23	26	20	270,826	28.7	35.6	7.0	16	25	111
5	112,387	33.9	36.2	2 ^	22	26	32	246,159	29.4	35.5	6.1	16	25	132
6	107,706	33.9	37.2	3.2	22	27	42	212,819	29.7	35.7	6.0	17	25	158
7	66,923	33.9	35.8	1.8	22	25	27	152,417	28.8	34.3	5.5	16	23	124
8	58,026	33.6	35.8	2.2	22	25	31	122,013	29.0	34.0	5.0	16	22	113
9	30,082	32.0	33.8	1.8	20	22	38	66,475	28.3	33.5	5.2	15	22	163
10	14,215	30.2	29.5	-0.7	17	17	-16	36,102	28.6	32.8	4.2	16	21	131
11	8,579	27.5	25.3	-2.2	14	12	-43	17,734	27.3	30.5	3.2	14	18	123
12	7,146	25.4	26.8	1.4	12	14	33	8,383	25.6	30.0	4.4	12	17	133

[2] The percent additional growth measure represents achievement gain made by Title I participants over and above that which is typically made during the course of a school year by children scoring at pretest time the same as the Title I children, but who do not receive supplementary services. A percent additional growth measure of 100% means that the Title I children have gained twice as much on a test as their peers who began the year at the same percentile.

Table 2

1979-80 Title I Mathematics Achievement Results (50 States plus the District of Columbia)

Grade	Annual Testing Schedule							Fall-to-Spring Testing Schedule						
	Weighted Number Tested	Normal Curve Equivalent			Percentile		Percent Additional Growth	Weighted Number Tested	Normal Curve Equivalent			Percentile		Percent Additiona Growth
		Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post			Pre	Post	Gain	Pre	Post	
2	50,084	41.9	43.0	1.1	35	37	5	124,576	32.0	42.5	10.5	20	36	88
3	65,407	39.7	40.1	0.4	31	32	0.2	137,608	31.5	40.1	8.6	19	32	69
4	70,637	37.5	39.2	1.8	28	30	15	147,333	30.8	39.8	9.0	18	31	134
5	71,038	36.6	39.0	2.5	26	30	23	136,372	30.5	38.7	8.2	18	30	115
6	69,002	35.4	39.3	3.9	24	31	44	119,003	30.9	38.6	7.7	18	29	141
7	36,268	34.5	36.7	2.2	23	26	29	74,807	30.6	36.9	6.3	18	27	150
8	29,530	34.3	37.1	2.8	23	27	44	60,747	30.1	36.3	6.2	17	26	184
9	15,971	34.6	35.1	0.5	23	24	10	28,579	29.8	35.9	6.2	17	25	200
10	7,718	32.9	31.6	-1.4	21	19	-34	12,192	32.0	37.3	5.3	20	27	204
11	4,158	34.9	35.3	0.4	24	24	11	5,270	32.5	38.1	5.6	20	29	311
12	3,587	33.8	34.9	1.0	22	24	48	2,195	30.7	37.2	6.5	18	27	650

Table 3

1979-80 Title I Reading and Mathematics Annual Achievement Results Corrected for Bias

Grade	Reading					Mathematics				
	NCE			Percentile		NCE			Percentile	
	Pre	Corrected Post	Gain	Pre	Corrected Post	Pre	Corrected Post	Gain	Pre	Corrected Post
2	37.6	37.6	0.0	28	28	41.9	42.0	0.1	35	35
3	34.3	35.7	1.4	23	25	39.7	39.1	-0.6	31	30
4	34.7	35.6	0.9	23	25	37.5	38.2	0.8	28	29
5	33.9	35.2	1.3	22	24	36.6	38.0	1.5	26	28
6	33.9	36.7	2.2	22	26	35.4	38.3	2.9	24	29
7	33.9	34.8	0.8	22	24	34.5	35.7	1.2	23	25
8	33.6	34.8	1.2	22	24	34.3	36.1	1.8	23	26
9	32.0	32.8	0.8	20	21	34.6	34.1	-0.5	23	23
10	30.2	28.5	-1.7	17	15	32.9	30.6	-2.4	21	18
11	27.5	24.3	-3.2	14	11	34.9	34.3	-0.6	24	23
12	25.4	25.8	0.4	12	13	33.8	33.9	0.0	22	22

Longitudinal Effects of Title I

The SES contains information on Title I students in grades 1 - 6 over three years, during which time students participated in various combinations of Title I and regular programs. Figure 1 presents achievement information for four groups of students:

- o Regular students who did not need and did not participate in Title I.
- o Title I participants in Year 1 who 'graduated out' of Title I in Year 2 and stayed out.
- o Title I participants in Years 1 and 2 who 'graduated out' of Title I in Year 3.
- o Title I participants who participated in the program for all three years.

The dotted line segments in Figure 1 indicate Title I participation across time. An examination of these lines shows that:

- o In reading, Title I graduates do not generally fall back noticeably after participation ceases.
- o In math, there generally is a decline after participation ceases.

Three year participants do not show improvement over the three years, which is to be expected--had they shown substantial improvement, they would have been graduated out of the program. This does indicate, however, that some students do not show gains even after multiple years of compensatory education.

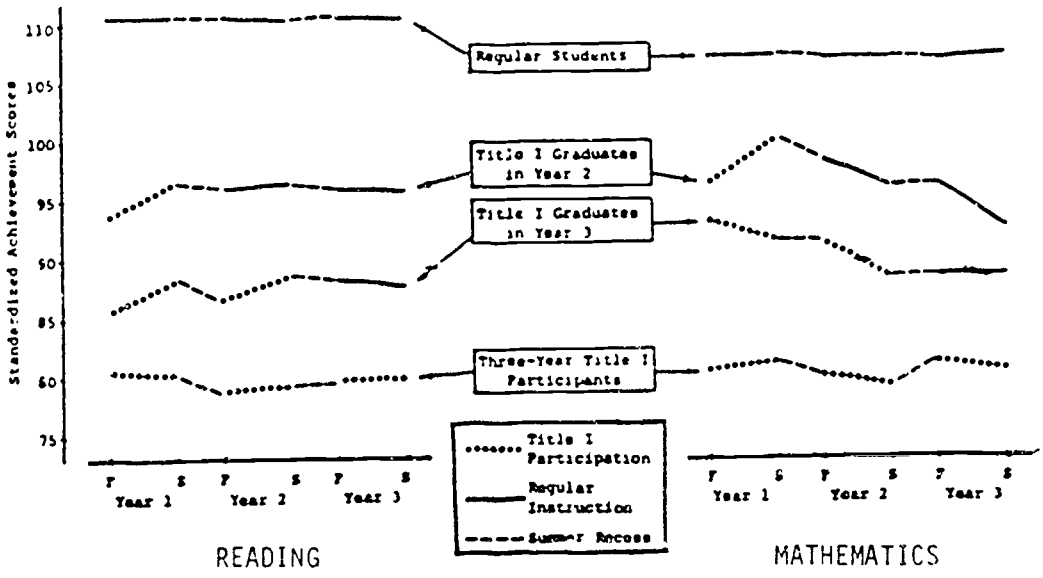

Figure 1. Effects of "graduation" from Title I on student achievement.

One other piece of evidence for the effectiveness of Title I is the NAEP studies which document improvements in the educational status of minority group nine-year-olds over the past four years, and which also show improved achievement levels in Title I eligibile schools. While the studies do not identify Title I children, at least partially these achievement gains may be attributed to increased attention to basic skills and to effective compensatory education programs such as Title I.

In summary, it appears that Title I has some sustained benefits for program participants (particularly in reading) but that some students (particularly in math) regress when Title I support is removed. Growth in practical skills, as measured by an instrument developed specifically for the SES, was found not to be a benefit from participation in compensatory education programs, and the relationships between attitudes and participation are unclear.

These results contradict somewhat findings from previous studies, and they confirm others. In particular, early reports from the SES (Interim Report, 1980 and Report 11, 1981) compared the achievement levels of regular students, Title I 'graduates,' continuing Title I students, and students who were no longer in the program because of promotion to a grade with no services or because the school lost funding. The Title I 'graduates' were compared to those students whose services were continuous over two years. The growth rate of students who 'graduated' was higher than the growth rate of students still receiving services, leading to the conclusion that termination of services did not result in students disastrously falling back to the level of continuing students. This is a different situation, however, than when students are compared over time, since the students who "graduated" may have always had a higher achievement level than the continuing students.

The indication that certain subgroups of students may perform better than others is interesting, especially given the TIERS finding that gains are found at the elementary school level but not at the high school level, where a smaller, more needier, proportion of students are served. One can note from Figure 1 that in reading, the students who made achievement gains, and who maintained those gains, began at a higher achievement level than did the students who did not show gains in the program.

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MEASURING THE FFFECTS OF COMPENSATORY EDUCATION -- SEARCHING FOR CONVERGENCE FROM NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL EVALUATIONS

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While the information provided through the two strategies is collected in very different ways, e.g. TIERS is universally implemented while studies only sample a small portion of projects; TIERS allows for the use of multiple instruments while national studies usually adopt one particular test, the basic questions addressed are the same -- what types of services are provided and to whom, and how effective are the services at improving educational achievement? The purpose of this presentation is to compare and contrast the evaluation strategies and the results, with particular emphasis on the TIERS, the Sustaining Effects Study and the results of the recent National Assessment longitudinal study.

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